

WEEKLY MEMO

Date: September 10, 2010

To: Mayor Lynn Stauss. Council President Dick Grassel, Vice President Henry Tweten, Council Members Marc Demers, Craig Buckalew, Wayne Gregoire, Greg Leigh, and Mike Pokrzywinski.

From: Scott Huizenga

RE: Weekly Update

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

September 14, 2010 – 5:00 pm – Work Session

September 21, 2010 – 5:00 pm – Council Meeting

September 22, 2010 – 1 pm – League of Minnesota Cities Regional Meeting - Crookston

September 27, 2010 – Curbside Chat

September 28, 2010 – 5:00 pm – Work Session

WEEKLY UPDATE:

Downstream Impact Group

The City Council recently received a notice that the Red River Diversion Downstream Impact Group requested a meeting at City Hall on Wednesday, September 29. Officials from the group would like to address its efforts to form a Joint Powers Agreement among various jurisdictions along the Red River and its tributaries that could be affected by a Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Project. The proposed meeting is part of a long-standing policy of our City to welcome neighboring jurisdictions into our community to discuss regional issues. I spoke with Representative Peterson's office this week to reiterate the City's stance that East Grand Forks does not intend to be an obstacle to flood protection for the Fargo-Moorhead area provided that appropriate mitigation is incorporated into the final plan. Robin Goracke, Peterson's Legislative Director, readdressed the Congressman's positions as he stated in East Grand Forks two weeks ago. Specifically, he will not support any project that negatively impacts downstream flood control projects, including East Grand Forks.

Infrastructure Spending Not Expected To Get Congressional Attention Until Next Year.

I have attached an article from the *Washington Post* related to a proposed \$50 billion infrastructure program proposed by the Obama administration. The City Council received information about the proposal on Tuesday evening from FS Engineering. According to this report, the package will likely not see any action before 2011, after the mid-term elections.

Web Outreach

The City continues to expand its web presence so that interested parties have more ways to access City information. I have started a new blog, entitled [The West Wing](#), to discuss policy issues at the City and State level. I will also occasionally discuss general trends in public administration as a whole. I intend to use this new source as a supplement, rather than a replacement for the City's existing resources such as the official [web site](#) and the City's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages. I will attempt to provide more detail and analysis on selected

issues that do not always conform to official news releases from the City. I elected to use an existing local blog resource through the *Grand Forks Herald*, known as *Area Voices*, to hopefully garner a broad, local audience. The blog address is <http://egfwestwing.areavoices.com>.

Also, Michelle French is coordinating the release of an official City newsletter in the coming weeks. Further details are forthcoming. As you know, these [weekly memos](#) have been made available on the City's web site. As always, we will continue to expand our information resources as time and technology allow. We always welcome your input.

Fall Cleanup

Residential Fall Clean-up will be October 4-8 on your regular scheduled pickup day with hazardous waste and electronic drop off on October 9th from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Public Works Department (1001 2nd St. NE)

AGENDA ITEMS:

- #1. The City received a petition to pave 14th Ave SE south of 13th Street SE via Special Assessment. The City Engineer will discuss the project scope and area, which includes unincorporated township land on the east side of the street. This presents a complication in which the City has four possible options.
 1. Gain the township's participation in the project to complete the full street.
 2. Complete a "half street" on the side of those properties that can be assessed within City limits.
 3. Pave the full street with the City paving the non-assessed Portion.
 4. Delay the project indefinitely.

- #2. Officials from American Crystal Sugar will update the Council on its odor prevention efforts.

- #3. Officer Schrage will give a presentation on the synthetic drug known by various monikers including "Spice." It is essentially a synthetic version of THC, the active chemical in marijuana. Many states have already banned the chemical; but Minnesota has not done so. One Minnesota City, Duluth, recently adopted a local ordinance that bans the sale of Spice. Multiple parties have threatened litigation over that ordinance. Meanwhile, several state legislators have mentioned plans to introduce legislation with regard to Spice in the next legislative session.

- #4. Mr. Wachter will briefly discuss his plans to conduct an online surplus auction.

The Washington Post

Obama proposal to fund infrastructure projects may hit election year wall

By Ashley Halsey III
Washington Post Staff Writer
Tuesday, September 7, 2010; 10:51 PM

With the nation's bridges and highways crumbling under the weight of age, attempts to pass a new six-year transportation bill have faltered mostly because Congress can't figure out how to pay for it.

President Obama's proposal on Monday to create an "infrastructure bank" may provide the long-sought solution for those reticent to raise the federal gas tax in the midst of a recession.

Rolling out his plan on Labor Day in Milwaukee, Obama took Capitol Hill and transportation lobbyists by surprise, and the scramble on Tuesday was to unearth critical details left out of the president's speech.

What seemed virtually certain is that his proposal for initial spending of \$50 billion on planes, trains and automobiles isn't going to gain much preelection headway in Congress, and most likely will wait until next year.

"The calendar is not our friend here, and the Republicans in the Senate aren't going to let him have a win before the election," said a staff member on a key transportation committee, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak on the issue. "We really can't expect

any progress this year."

The gas tax has been the primary source of revenue for the federal Highway Trust Fund. Since 1993, the federal government has collected 18.4 cents per gallon, but more fuel-efficient vehicles have contributed to a steep decline in the fund. Five years ago, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said it was falling about \$45 billion short of the estimated \$222 billion a year needed to maintain the surface transportation system.

The concept of an infrastructure bank to provide loans and grants for transportation projects has been discussed for decades by federal policymakers. It would leverage private capital and, ideally, be created with sufficient insulation to protect it from pork-barrel spending by Congress.

In Milwaukee, the president outlined a

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The Washington Post

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proposal to invest in rebuilding 150,000 miles of roads, maintaining 4,000 miles of rail line and rehabilitating 150 miles of airport runway. The White House revealed some details of the plan in conference calls on Tuesday to transportation industry groups.

Federal transportation spending is spelled out in massive pieces of legislation that govern the flow of money for six-year periods, giving states the ability to structure their construction plans with confidence the cash will be there.

Traditionally, the annual federal outlay has increased in each of the six years as projects evolve from planning to the most expensive phase - actual construction. This time, Obama wants to begin the six-year cycle with a heavy infusion of money.

"He wants to front-load the six-year authorization with \$50 billion," said John Horsley, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

Those briefed by the White House came away with a sense that the administration preferred to provide the \$50 billion to kick off a new six-year program, but might go along if Congress opted for a one-time expenditure akin to the stimulus package.

The American Road and Transportation Builders Association was quick to insist that the spending be included as part of a

reauthorization bill.

"Passage of robust, multi-year transportation bills is essential to assure predictability and continuity in the domestic transportation design and construction industry," the group's president, Pete Ruane, said in a statement. "Accordingly, the \$50 billion investment proposed by President Obama must be part of a long-term reauthorization bill and not a stand-alone measure."

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